

Frequent Reflections

(Abhiñham pacca-vek-khi-tab-baṃ)

Buddhism always gives us a new eye to see the world. That eye is not just a physical eye, but an eye of wisdom which points out us the path of liberation from suffering. The main purpose of everyone is happiness. Therefore, our real skillfulness or success depends on how far our efforts cause to overcome suffering and achieve the real happiness that none can challenge. All Buddhist doctrines focus on making an unshakable mind that none can bring us suffering.

Ordinary people think that happiness or suffering is external. That is why people always look for happiness in the external world. However, finally they end their lives without contentment since they don't see the real path to liberation. In this situation, the Buddha with his supra-mundane knowledge kindly points out how real happiness arises. According to Buddhism, we ourselves create happiness or suffering according to our mental conditions at the present moment. If someone can see this, he or she is able to overcome suffering and gain supreme happiness in this life itself.

The Buddha's message that leads to getting rid of unsatisfactoriness and achieve real happiness is very clear and systematic. Listening to this message is a very rare chance. Today we have it to listen as a result of a lot of merits and blessings that we have done in our previous lives. The sublime truth that the Buddha explained is well expounded (*Svākkhāto*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akālika*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Vinnuhi*). If the Buddha has preached any teaching to get rid of suffering, nobody can say that it doesn't cause to get rid of suffering with reason.

Five Things that should be reflected frequently

In the Tāna Sutta (AN), the Buddha kindly declares us to reflect on five things.

Pañcimāni, bhikkhave, ṭhānāni abhiñham pacca-vek-khi-tab-bāni itthiyā vā purisena vā gahaṭṭhena vā pabbajitena vā.

“Bhikkhus, there are five things that should often be reflected upon by a woman or a man, by a householder or one gone forth.

What they are?

Katamāni pañca? ‘Jarādhammomhi, jaraṃ anatīto’ti abhiñham pacca-vek-khi-tab-baṃ itthiyā vā purisena vā gahaṭṭhena vā pabbajitena vā. ‘Byādhi-dham-momhi, byādhiṃ anatīto’ti abhiñham pacca-vek-khi-tab-baṃ itthiyā vā purisena vā gahaṭṭhena vā pabbajitena vā. ‘Maraṇa-dham-momhi, maraṇaṃ anatīto’ti abhiñham pacca-vek-khi-tab-baṃ itthiyā vā purisena vā gahaṭṭhena vā pabbajitena vā. ‘Sabbhehi me piyehi manāpehi nānābhāvo vinābhāvo’ti

abhiñhaṃ pacca-vek-khi-tab-baṃ itthiyā vā purisena vā gahaṭṭhena vā pabbajitena vā. 'Kammassakomhi, kammadāyādo kammayoni kammabandhu kamma-paṭi-saraṇo. Yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi—kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā—tassa dāyādo bhavissāmī'ti abhiñhaṃ pacca-vek-khi-tab-baṃ itthiyā vā purisena vā gahaṭṭhena vā pabbajitena vā.

(1) A woman or a man, a householder or one gone forth (monk), should often reflect thus: 'I am subject to old age; I am not exempt from old age.'

(2) A woman or a man, a householder or one gone forth, should often reflect thus: 'I am subject to illness; I am not exempt from illness.'

(3) A woman or a man, a householder or one gone forth, should often reflect thus: 'I am subject to death; I am not exempt from death.'

(4) A woman or a man, a householder or one gone forth, should often reflect thus: 'I must be parted and separated from everyone and everything dear and agreeable to me.'

(5) A woman or a man, a householder or one gone forth, should often reflect thus: 'I am the owner of my kamma, the heir of my kamma; I have kamma as my origin, kamma as my relative, kamma as my resort; I will be the heir of whatever kamma, good or bad, that I do.'

According to Buddhism, there are four kinds of Karmas (actions).

- i. There are some Karmas that are black which consequence black results.
(*kaṇhaṃ kaṇhavipākaṃ*)
- ii. There are some Karmas that are white which consequence white results.
(*sukkaṃ sukkavipākaṃ*)
- iii. There are some Karmas that are black & white which consequence black & white results. (*kaṇhasukkaṃ kaṇha-sukka-vipākaṃ*)
- iv. There are some Karmas that are neither black nor white which consequence neither black & white results.

(*akaṇhaasukkaṃ akaṇha-asukka-vipākaṃ kammakkhayāya saṃvattati*).

The Buddha first, encourages us to overcome black karmas, then to practice white karmas, and finally the Buddha emphasizes the importance of practicing some karmas that are neither black nor white which consequence neither black & white results. The forth one is unique that nowhere can be seen.

The Supreme Buddha, in the Tana Sutta, kindly, points us out the unavoidable realities things that we have to face not only in our day today life until death, but even after death. If someone needs to face those challenges without sorrow and lamentation, he or she has to develop his or her spiritual skills to the maximum level.

Increasing skillfulness is one of the main purposes of everyone in the world. That is why everyone likes to develop their skills. Most people use their skills to earn material things and wealth. That ordinary skillfulness not only brings us material wealth but suffering too. However, the main purpose of skillfulness that Buddhism introduces helps us to realize the life on the path of liberation focusing on getting rid of suffering. Skillfulness in Buddhism means understanding arising and ceasing of suffering. It means understanding the four noble truths.

They are;

1. The noble truth of suffering
2. The noble truth of the cause of suffering
3. The noble truth of the cessation from suffering
4. The noble truth of the path that leads to get rid of suffering

Suffering is a misunderstanding based on thinking that there is a permanent world which brings us happiness and suffering around us. The cause of suffering is the attachment or desire to our inner life. Suffering arises because of this severe attachment. The cessation from this attachment is the third noble truth which is the cessation of suffering or Nirvana. The noble eightfold path is the path that leads to end suffering.

The Buddha says very clearly in his words, I declare the cessation of suffering to the person who knows the Dhamma, who sees the Dhamma, not to the person who doesn't know the Dhamma, who doesn't see the Dhamma (*Jānato aham bhikkhave passato āsavānam khayam vadāmi, no ajānato no apassato*). Here it is very important to know the process of arising and ceasing of suffering. Understanding the getting rid of suffering depends on understanding of the dependent origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*). Also, understanding the dependent origination means understanding the process of our entire life.

We continuously experience through our six senses which are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects such as forms, sounds, smell or taste reach these senses, we experience the world. The Buddha describes that all our entire world is these six internal senses and external objects. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceasing. Nothing is permanent among those twelve things. They arise and cease at the moment according to the conditions. They are not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence. (අනුත්වා සම්භූතං හුත්වා න භවිස්සති). It means if we experience something now, it has not happened in the past in the same way like now. This is the special teaching that Buddhism teaches us as impermanence in the concept of the dependent origination. If we can understand and keep our mindfulness according to this knowledge, we can overcome all kinds of sufferings. Here, first we have to develop our knowledge, secondly, according to knowledge, we have to reflect on it, according to the knowledge, and finally, we have to apply it in our life practicing tranquility and insight meditation.

Whenever we experience something through our senses five aggregates arise. We experience something about forms, sounds, smell, taste, touch and volitions as the result of arising of five aggregates. Not only arising five aggregates, but they immediately cease without remaining anything. This is the nature of any experience we receive through our senses. Five aggregates are

form, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness. These five aggregates are also impermanent. Buddha says very clearly, he declares to reflect on these five aggregates as arising and ceasing to persons who are in any kind of spiritual state. As the result of reflecting on five aggregates as arising and ceasing, impermanence can be realized by the disciple who knows the Dhamma, who sees the Dhamma. Then unsatisfactoriness and selflessness are also understood. According to the Abhiññā Sutta, the highest skillfulness of an intelligent person is the understanding of the five aggregates. Further the discourse explains the main things that should be given up are ignorance and desire to becoming or existence (Bhava Tanhā). After the understanding of arising and ceasing of the five aggregates the skillful disciple always lives reflecting on the three characteristics which are impermanence, suffering and egolessness. Simultaneously, learned disciple frequently practices tranquility and insight meditation like breathing. Practicing tranquility and wisdom is the highest practice of the intelligent person. If someone can be on this path, he or she is always going on the path of purification reaching ultimate liberation. The highest achievement of the intelligent and skillful person is knowledge and liberation from all suffering.

At the very beginning on this spiritual path first of all we should be honest, intelligent and kind. To achieve the final bliss of liberation or enlightenment, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge. At the very first level in Buddhism the knowledge is very important. Buddhism compares knowledge as wealth (*Suta Dhanam*). The Buddha teaches that, to achieve all kinds of results such as intelligence, knowledge plays a major role. It is not only enough knowledge but reflecting on it again and again is also very important. Furthermore, we have to practice it in our daily life as morality (*Seela*) and meditation (*Bhāvanā*) to see the results in our life. Meditation is further divided into two as tranquility (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassanā*). Hence all doctrines that the Buddha taught us focus on the skillfulness in tranquility and insight. Both of them are based on mindfulness which is the awareness of body and mind.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

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